

Evaluating Situation/Conflict Assessment Services: Design Document

Situation or conflict assessments are conducted by a neutral party and include a series of confidential, often structured interviews in person or on the telephone with individuals or groups of parties. Through such assessments, assessors (neutral practitioners) identify and clarify key issues and parties, and assess the appropriateness of a mediation/facilitation process and its potential for helping the parties reach agreement. Assessment reports seek to clarify and communicate in a neutral manner the issues and concerns of all parties, and commonly conclude with process design recommendations intended to provide the parties with one or more options for effectively collaborating to find a solution to their conflict.

The U.S. Institute for Environmental Conflict Resolution has designed an evaluation system to (a) measure and report on the performance of situation/conflict assessment services, and (b) to facilitate continual learning and improvement when evaluation information is gathered, analyzed, and shared with program managers/administrators, assessors, users, and other appropriate audiences.

Design Elements and Data Collection

Immediately following conclusion of a situation/conflict assessment process, the initiating agencies/organization(s) and key participants will be surveyed once via questionnaire to determine their views on a variety of issues. Topics to be investigated include: was the conflict assessment approach well suited to the nature of the issues in conflict; was the selected assessor

(neutral practitioner) appropriate for the assignment; were all key parties consulted, and, were all key issues and alternatives properly identified and considered? The voluntary questionnaire contains 11 questions requiring respondents to provide fill-in-the blank and open-ended responses (Appendix A). Information from the questionnaire provides the opportunity to: (a) evaluate the performance for specific cases/projects; (b) evaluate the performance of assessment programs; and (c) use the evaluation feedback as a learning tool to improve the design of future assessment cases/projects. *Affected Entities:* Entities potentially affected by this action are individuals in organizations that participate in a conflict assessment. *Burden Statement:* It is estimated that the annual national public burden and associated costs will be approximately 62.5 hours and \$2,437 respectively. These values were calculated assuming that on average: a) respondents require 10 minutes per questionnaire; b) there are 5 respondents per project c) respondents are surveyed only once; and d) there will be 75 assessments evaluated each year. Cost burden estimates assume: a) there are no capital or start-up costs for respondents, and b) respondents' time is valued at \$39/hr.

Immediately following conclusion of a situation/conflict assessment, the selected assessor(s) will be surveyed once via questionnaire to determine their views on a variety of issues. Topics to be investigated include: was the conflict assessment approach well suited to the nature of the issues in conflict; was assisted negotiation recommended; and, was the recommendation followed? In most cases, it will be specified in the assessor's contract that the assessor will be required to complete the questionnaire. The assessor's questionnaire contains nine questions requiring respondents to provide fill-in-the blank and open-ended responses (Appendix B). Information from the questionnaire will permit the agency staff to evaluate the assessment process and outcomes, and learn from and improve the design of future assessment projects. *Affected*

Entities: Entities potentially affected by this action are assessors who either are staff from or have been contracted by the agency. *Burden Statement:* It is estimated that the annual national public burden and associated costs will be approximately 5 hours and \$195, respectively. These values were calculated assuming that on average: a) assessors require 6 minutes per questionnaire; b) there is one respondent per project; c) respondents are surveyed only once; and d) there will be 50 assessments evaluated each year.¹ Cost burden estimates assume: a) there are no capital or start-up costs for respondents, and b) respondents' time is valued at \$39/hr.

Data Use and Audiences

Information from the questionnaire will permit the (a) measurement and reporting of performance for specific situation/conflict assessments, (b) measurement and reporting of program performance when the data are aggregated across all evaluated assessments, and (c) learning and improvement when the feedback is used to design and execute future assessments. The evaluation audiences include the project managers/administrators and the Office of Management and Budget.

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¹ In 2003, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Conflict Prevention and Resolution Center (CPRC) was granted the approval of the Office of Management and Budget to act as a named administrator of the U.S. Institute's currently approved information collections for evaluation. The CPRC and the U.S. Institute will seek approval as part of this proposed collection to continue this evaluation partnership. The CPRC plans to administer the initiating organization end-of-process questionnaire, but not the assessor questionnaire as described above.